



Klamath Network Featured Creature

March 2006

Fisher (*Martes pennanti*)

FIELD NOTES:

General Description:

The fisher is a sleek and majestic animal. Male fishers are generally larger than females, but on average have a body length of 31 to 41 inches and weigh between 3 and 18 pounds. Their coats range from medium to dark brown, with gold to silver hoariness on their head and shoulders, and with black legs and tail. Fishers have five toes and retractable claws.

Behavior:

Fishers are agile, excellent tree climbers and swimmers, but usually move about on the ground. They traverse a home range of 50 to 150 square miles, wandering farther in winter when food may be scarce. Fishers use resting sites or temporary dens in logs, hollow trees, stumps, holes in the ground, brush piles, or in winter, holes dug in the snow. The species uses a maternity den located in a hollow tree. Male aggression has been observed, supporting the notion that they are solitary.

Feeding:

Snowshoe hares and common porcupines are fishers main prey. They can also eat squirrels, birds, shrews, and mice. Porcupines are well armed with quills that can injure or rarely kill a fisher. Fishers will begin the attack with repeated blows to the porcupines face, until it is weakened to a point where the fisher can go in for the kill.

Where to see it in the Klamath Parks:

Fishers are generally thought of as a very secretive creature and are rarely observed. If you were lucky enough to find one, it may be in coniferous forests in the Klamath region in habitats with high canopy closure, and many hollow trees.



Fisher © Patricia A. Michaels 2005



Fisher © Erwin Bauer, 2005

Habitat:

Fishers prefer coniferous forests, but they are also found in mixed and deciduous forests. Fishers prefer habitats with many hollow trees for dens.

Distribution:

The species are found only in North America, from the Sierra Nevada of California to the Appalachians of West Virginia and north to Alaska.

Status:

Logging of coniferous forests greatly impact fisher populations by destroying their preferred habitat. *Martes pennanti* populations in the southern Sierra Nevada are vulnerable have been proposed as candidates for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Additional Information:

For more information on *Martes pennanti* visit NatureServe Explorer:

<http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/servlet/NatureServe?searchName=MA RTES+PENNANTI+>